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# GALOP

Gay

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London

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Police

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Monitoring

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Group

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*1st Annual Report*  

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*April 1984*

## Introduction

The Gay London Police Monitoring Group, (GALOP), has been in existence since June 1982, and has been able to report much success in exposing the abuse and harassment experienced by lesbians and gay men from the Metropolitan Police.

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The major achievement has been to show that the police use agents provocateur to gain arrests and convictions of gay men. GALOP has given support and advice to many of these victims of police prejudice, and several of the victims have decided to refute the police allegations and have defended themselves in the Crown Court, rather than accepting the police advice to plead guilty in a magistrates court. Of those who have pleaded not guilty, all those whose cases have been heard have been found not guilty. The use of agent provocateur has been the subject of Parliamentary questions, and has also been raised during the debate on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill.

In broader terms, GALOP, through the publication and distribution of its bust card, and through the press coverage in both the gay and non-gay press, and also through its meetings and discussions with gay and non-gay groups, has raised awareness of issues surrounding the manner in which lesbians and gay men are policed. This increased awareness has been raised in both the lesbian and gay populations of London, and also among the general public.

GALOP acknowledges some lack of success, due largely to limited resources. The attempt to quantify the number of gay men being arrested and charged for persistent importuning and gross indecency has so far proved impossible, GALOP regrets that its support to London's lesbians has so far been minimal. This is due in part to GALOP being strongly identified with the campaign on the issues surrounding the policing of Earls Court. However, GALOP hopes to remedy this deficiency by expending more effort into investigating the police treatment of lesbians and gay men who are the victims of crime, these issues being of equal importance to both lesbians and gay men.

I should like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed to GALOP's success. This includes those volunteers who have devoted large amounts of their leisure time to the day to day running of GALOP, and to our full-time worker David Wilson-Carr. I should also like to thank those members of other monitoring groups who gave us encouragement to initiate the project, and who have given support and advice since. Special thanks are due to Clare Demuth and Judy Ware, both of the GLC Police Committee Support Unit, who have assisted us in our grant applications and in other ways. I should also like to express my thanks to the GLC Police Committee for the financial support that has made most of our successes possible.

However I should like to express my greatest thanks to those lesbians and gay men who have come forward and recounted their often traumatic experiences at the hands of the Metropolitan Police. Without these individual acts of bravery, GALOP could not have hoped to expose the systematic harassment experienced by the lesbian and gay communities in London. I hope that their example will encourage the countless others who have had less than a fair deal from the Met because of their sexuality to stand up and demand equality from the 'law'.

*Brian R. Stockdale  
Convenor*

In recent years there has been growing evidence that there is something seriously wrong with the role of the police. There have been many reports of the police acting violently towards members of the public, in some cases leading to the death of the individual. At the same time it has become apparent that the police are attempting to criminalise large sections of the community, that is they look upon certain groups in our society, such as blacks, trades unionists, and homosexuals, as criminals, whether or not there is any evidence to support their views. This has led to increasing conflicts between these groups and the police. On occasions these conflicts have led to major public disturbances, such as those experienced in Brixton, Finsbury Park and Toxteth in the summer of 1981.

Although there have not been such explosive results from the police's attitude to homosexuals there have been many reports of police verbally and physically abusing lesbians and gay men. The police also appear to spend a disproportionate amount of time policing areas where gay men socialise, in order to obtain easy arrests and convictions for the minor crimes of soliciting and gross indecency, and on the other hand their reaction to lesbians and gay men who have been assaulted or have been the victim of some other crime appears less than satisfactory. Although the police have a statutory duty to inform employers if an employee is convicted of a homosexual offence in certain categories of employment, the police have been known to inform employers of employees' sexuality even when no sexual offence has occurred. In one notorious case, Strathclyde Police informed the employers of a handy man at a youth camp, when the man was the victim of a robbery. The man was subsequently dismissed and the dismissal was upheld by an employment tribunal.

The Establishment appears to have ignored these signs of police abuse, and in both 1979 and 1983 the Conservative Party, with the support of much of Fleet Street, adopted a strong 'law and order' stance, by claiming that crime was increasing at an unprecedented rate, and that to combat this crime wave it was necessary to strengthen the police force both by increasing manpower and by introducing the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. This bill will, if it becomes law, legitimise many of the practices that the police at present employ, and seriously erode our civil liberties.

Many people disagree strongly with this 'law and order' approach to policing. It is generally recognised that the greatest ally of the police in their attempt to combat crime is the public at large. The public must have confidence in the police before they will report crime, and in most cases it is the response of the public which enables the police to clear up the crime. Therefore it would seem that the public's confidence in the police must be restored.

At present, in all areas except for London, the Chief Constable is nominally accountable to his local Police Authority. This Authority, which is drawn from local councillors and Justices of the Peace, have the power to ask questions of their Chief Constable, and can also exert control over police expenditure. Most of these authorities merely act as a rubber stamp for the local police force, but in the past few years some have begun to exercise their powers and have refused to sanction police spending, in particular the purchase of riot control equipment.

Many campaigners in this area feel that the solution to the present problem is to make the police accountable to the communities that they police. In the 1981 GLC elections the Labour Party included police accountability in their manifesto. Londoners do not even have a Police Authority, the Metropolitan Police being directly under the control of the Home Secretary. This has meant that any attempt to raise questions about the conduct of the Metropolitan Police had to be channelled through an MP, and that these questions never received satisfactory responses. On gaining office the Labour Party set up a Police Committee. This committee, through the Police Committee Support Unit, has investigated various models of making the police accountable, and has also supported various Police Monitoring Groups examining the role of the police within their own communities, by providing funds enabling the groups to employ full-time workers.

The original monitoring groups, which mostly arose during and after the disturbances of 1981, were locally based groups, mostly in inner city areas. The groups decided that it would be useful if they could keep in contact with one another, to discuss their problems,

and exchange ideas and expertise. In February 1982, these groups organised a conference to which other groups concerned with policing were invited. Among the groups represented was the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE). Although the attempt to set up a formal federation of police monitoring groups foundered, the groups continued to meet informally, and CHE kept in contact with the groups.

Although most of the groups were aware that the police harassed the lesbian and gay male populations in their areas, the groups felt that they were not achieving much response from these parts of their communities. After several months, it was decided that the most practical way of reaching out to the lesbian and gay male population was to set up a specifically gay police monitoring group, which could operate within the lesbian and gay communities. To this end a meeting was held in June 1982.

Various lesbian and gay groups were specifically invited to the meeting, and the meeting was also advertised in the gay press. CHE, Gay Switchboard, Gay Legal Advice and the NCCL Gay Rights Committee were all represented at the meeting, as well as CAPA, Haringey Independent Police Committee, Release and the GLC Police Committee Support Unit, and also several gay men. The meeting quickly reached agreement that such an initiative was to be encouraged, and several people volunteered to help set up the group which subsequently became known as the Gay London Police Monitoring Group (GALOP).

The early meetings of GALOP attempted to identify the special problems lesbians and gay men encountered with the police. Two main areas were identified:

- (i) the police attitude and treatment of gay men soliciting and cottaging, and
- (ii) the police response to lesbians and gay men who were the victims of crime.

Although the two areas overlap it was decided to concentrate the group's energies on the first of these areas. This decision was no doubt partially due to the absence of any lesbians at the meetings. However the decision was made and two projects were initiated.

The first and more ambitious project was the production and distribution of a Bust Card. This is dealt with fully in the following section.

The second project was an attempt to obtain an estimate of the number of men coming before the courts for the offences of soliciting and gross indecency and to examine how the police treated the offenders and presented their evidence. Initially it was considered that this information could be obtained by monitoring local magistrates courts. However, this was eventually found to be over-ambitious in terms of person-power. Many hours would have to be spent in court with no guarantee that any relevant cases would be heard, whilst the neighbouring court may have dealt with several cases. It was then decided to conduct a survey of solicitors known to defend such cases. This would not give a very accurate picture as many men are not represented, and plead guilty, but it was felt that the information would prove to be useful. A questionnaire was devised and distributed to about 80 solicitors in the London area. Response to the questionnaire was extremely poor. On reflection GALOP has decided that it was perhaps being too optimistic in expecting solicitors to take the time to fill in the questionnaires. GALOP still believes that it would be highly advantageous to obtain the information, but has so far been unable to devise an effective means of obtaining this information.

As well as producing the Bust Card and the solicitors questionnaire, GALOP was at the same time trying to obtain the services of a full-time worker. This required much consideration. Initially the group would have to restrict itself to one worker. This would mean that the worker would spend most of his or her time in isolation. To counter this isolation GALOP would have to ensure that the worker was offered support and guidance on a regular basis. To this end a sub-committee, the Management Committee, was set up, with the purpose of maintaining regular contact with the worker, and ensuring the smooth running of the office. Since the worker, David Wilson-Carr, took up the post in July 1983, the Management Committee has tried to meet with the worker at least on a weekly basis, and has offered to be available at other times to offer advice and assistance.

## The Bust Card

As mentioned earlier, one of the two initial projects undertaken was the production and distribution of a 'bust' card. It was hoped that the bust card would increase awareness within the gay community of an individual's rights when dealing with the police, and it was specifically hoped that the card would encourage gay people to plead not guilty. It was felt that the police spend a disproportionate amount of their time in policing areas frequented by gay men in order to gain easy arrest and convictions, thus achieving an artificially high clear-up rate. Although the police usually claim that they are acting on complaints from the public, the evidence for these complaints is very slim, and in any case, it seems highly unlikely that, in the cases where the police do receive a complaint from a member of the public, that this leads to the arrest of those people who were the subject of the original complaint. It was also felt that the police intimidated their victims into pleading guilty and were prepared to fabricate evidence in order to achieve a conviction.

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Earlier attempts to inform lesbians and gay men of their rights have been made. The National Council for Civil Liberties has produced a pack which includes specific information for gay men, but it is presented in very legalistic terms and it is not easily understood by the average person. Release have also issued a bust card but this, although much shorter and less legalistic, is mainly directed towards those using drugs.

It was decided that the card should be as simple as possible, and that the information it gave should be easy to remember. It would seem highly unlikely that anyone unfortunate enough to be arrested would be allowed to consult the card after arrest, and only if the information was clear and concise would the person arrested be able to recall the information. Therefore it was decided to restrict the information to a few Do's and Don't's, and include the telephone of London Gay Switchboard, which operates a 24-hour service and can provide an emergency list of solicitors.

The production and distribution of the card was an expensive undertaking, and funding for the project was accomplished by a grant from the GLC Police Committee. 100,000 cards were printed and to date over half of these have been distributed. The cards have been sent to all the gay and lesbian groups operating in London, to other police monitoring groups, law centres and to Citizens Advice Bureaux, as well as to individual lesbians and gay men.

Reaction to the card has been very favourable. After a major distribution attempt centred around Gay Pride Week 1983, a case exemplifying the benefits of such a card was reported in Capital Gay. Two young men wearing gay badges, were arrested for obstruction in Piccadilly Circus. When they asked the arresting officer why they had been singled out from the other people in the Circus, the officer replied 'Well, you're woolly woofers, aren't you?'. On being taken to Bow Street police station the police demanded to take their photographs. This they refused to do, and produced the Bust Card. The police then warned the two of the dangers of such cards, but released them without taking their photographs. Subsequently they were found not guilty of the obstruction charges.

Unfortunately those most at risk from police persecution, namely those men who do not identify as gay and whose only contact with other homosexuals is in public lavatories, are the least likely to have seen a copy of the card. The only way to inform these people is by making the card as widely available as possible, especially in non-gay circles. However it is hoped that the card has helped people by encouraging those arrested to defend themselves, and save them from gaining a criminal record. It is also hoped that if more gay men defend their cases and are found not guilty that the police will be forced to reconsider their approach to policing the gay community, and stop them treating gay men as an easy way of getting arrests and convictions, and that this will benefit those men who have not the courage to admit to their homosexuality.

## Casework

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Since GALOP first began to monitor the way London's police force treat the gay people they come into contact with, GALOP has heard from many people who have described their experiences.

Some of the experiences clearly demonstrate the way some police officers regard gay people as suitable victims to be harassed and insulted, other cases show the ways police officers will purposely entrap gay men (the cases in Earls Court being the obvious examples) and then pressurise the men into pleading guilty in order to gain an 'easy conviction'. Other cases involve gay people who have been the victims of crime, such as being attacked, but whose requests for assistance were ignored or trivialised by the Police.

The following are some of the cases GALOP has dealt with in the last six months. The names of the people involved have been changed to preserve the confidentiality of GALOP's service and in some instances protect the people from further police harassment.

Albert was stabbed by a man who had made sexual advances which were rejected. As a result Albert was hospitalised for nine days before discharging himself. The attacker was arrested by the police and eventually charged with attempted GBH, however when the victim attempted to find out what was happening the police refused to tell him any of the details, saying that as a result of a plea bargain by the attacker, Albert was not needed as a witness and was 'no longer involved with the case'. Despite many attempts, it was eight months before Albert recovered his property (taken from him the day of the attack) from the police. His property was handed back in public in a 'humiliating manner' with jokes being made about fairies and queers wearing leather jackets and trousers. Albert was never able to find out any details of the case, what happened in court, what the sentence was, what mitigation was offered in the attacker's defence. Albert says the police were 'unhelpful, unfriendly and hostile' throughout his dealings with them.

Benjamin met and had sex with Christopher. Two days later Benjamin was on his way home; parked ten yards from his house was a police van. Benjamin was told to get in. He was in the police van for 15-20 minutes and was insulted, threatened and accused of sexually assaulting Christopher. Benjamin was told however that he was not going to be arrested or charged and that 'this is just a warning, we don't like queers like you and we're going to be watching you from now on'. Benjamin later went to the police station to complain about the officers' aggressive and insulting behaviour and was told by the duty sergeant that there was no record of any allegations of sexual assault and the only record by that police van was of someone observed acting suspiciously and being told to go home, yet the van was only parked ten yards from Benjamin's home.

Douglas left the Coleherne at closing time and was walking to his car, in Wharfedale Street. A young man wearing a tight T-shirt and tight jeans with a rip across one buttock smiles at Douglas. They begin a conversation, the young man questions Douglas very directly, does Douglas want to fuck or does he just want a blow job? Douglas is hesitant to talk about sex immediately and suggests they go back to Douglas's place south of the river. The young man says that is too far to go - he has a place around the corner. They walk up Warwick Road and when they reach Nevern Square, Douglas has his arm put behind his back and the young man and a third man identify themselves as police officers and Douglas is arrested. At Earls Court police station he is charged with persistently importuning. Whilst he is at the police station pressure is put on him to tell the police how he intends to plead and when he tells them 'not guilty' further pressure is put on him to plead guilty because it was only a minor charge and it would be unfortunate if his employers were to discover that he was gay, his parents or next door neighbours for that matter. The police go on to assure that if he pleads guilty at the Magistrates Court he won't receive any bad publicity.

Douglas resists this pressure and over seven months later at Knightsbridge Crown Court a jury took 25 minutes to reach a verdict of not guilty.

A man who wished to remain anonymous (we've called him Edward) telephoned GALOP to say he had heard about GALOP and wanted to tell us about his being arrested.

He had left the Coleherne at closing time, he was walking home when he saw a young man in tight jeans, T-shirt and a leather jacket. After a short conversation the

young man suggests they go to his place around the corner. They walk along Warwick Road and as they near Nevern Square, a distance of several hundred yards, they are joined by a third man. They identify themselves as police officers and Edward is arrested for persistent importuning. Whilst in Earls Court police station pressure is put on Edward to plead guilty in order to save time and trouble. At the Magistrates Court Edward does in fact plead guilty and is fined £75. He rang GALOP to say how annoyed he was with himself for not fighting the case and how angry he was at how the police presented their evidence and 'lied quite openly in court'.

□ A man, wishing to remain anonymous (we've called him Francis), telephoned GALOP to tell us about an incident in Earls Court. He had left the Coleherne at closing time and was walking home. After a brief conversation with a young man in tight jeans ripped across his bum and tight T-shirt he is invited back to the young man's flat around the corner. They walk along Warwick Road and as they near Nevern Square they are joined by a third man, they identify themselves as police officers and Francis is arrested for persistent importuning. At the Magistrates Court Francis pleads guilty and is fined £75. He now wishes he had defended the case especially after the way the police lied saying that he had approached four men attempting to rub their crotches, when in fact the only person he had spoken to was the plain clothes man. He 'still cannot believe that the police would have the nerve to invent a story like the one they presented in court'.

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□ George contacted GALOP and wanted to tell GALOP about him being arrested in Earls Court. He had left the Coleherne at closing time; on the way to his car which was parked in Finborough Road he got into conversation with a young man. The young man was leaning against railings in Wharfedale Street. He was wearing a tight T-shirt and a pair of tight jeans which were torn across the bum. After a brief chat the young man invites George back to his flat around the corner. As they are walking up Warwick Road and nearing the underground station exit they are joined by a third man. They then identify themselves to George as police officers and he is arrested for persistent importuning. In the police station he is advised to plead guilty in order to avoid any publicity and embarrassment. George does plead guilty at the Magistrates Court and is fined £100. George contacted GALOP to tell us of his experiences and to ask us to tell people never to be pressured into pleading guilty like he was. George was 'appalled at the way the two officers stood up in court and told a pack of lies about the way he was supposed to have importuned several men that night, when the only guy I spoke to turned out to be a cop'. George went on to say 'I'd never had any hassle with the police before this, and didn't think this sort of thing happened in this country — but now I'll never trust the police again.'

□ Hazel rang GALOP to tell us about an incident involving the police in Hyde Park. Hazel is a member of the Hyde Park Gays, a group of gay people who have been speaking at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park for nearly two years. One Sunday afternoon in September they were approached by a policeman and told to take their banner down, if they did not they would be thrown out of the park. Hazel says that previous to this they had developed a reasonably friendly relationship with the police but this was a policeman they had never seen before. She went on to say that there were several other groups of speakers displaying banners but they were the only group to be singled out. Afterwards a member of the audience heard the same policeman tell a police woman to stand and the back and listen and 'the moment this lot steps out of line close them down'. Hazel said she felt this was clearly a case of Hyde Park Gays being harassed by this particular policeman who made it clear by his 'aggressive and hostile manner' that he did not like gays.

□ Ivan was waiting to use a public telephone adjacent to public lavatories in Charing Cross Road. He noticed an attractive young man leaning against the railings. While Ivan was using the phone the young man looked and smiled at Ivan 'giving him the eye'. Ivan finished his phone call and walked up the Charing Cross Road towards Covent Garden being followed by the young man. They began to chat and Ivan was asked 'Where do you live?, what are you into? do you like to fuck or are you passive?'. The young man then said 'I have to go and see a friend, but it will only take a few minutes, you wait around the corner and then we can go back to my place'. Ivan became very suspicious and instead of waiting where he had been told, he followed the young man and saw him go into the back entrance of Bow Street Police Station. After a few minutes the young man returned walking next to a uniformed police station. Ivan climbed on his bicycle and left the area. Ivan said that although he had no firm evidence, he was positive that the young

man who had smiled and approached him was a plain clothes police officer and that he had narrowly avoided being entrapped.

□ James telephoned GALOP to say he had just read an article in *Capital Gay* about gay men being entrapped and arrested in Earls Court. He said that he was extremely surprised to hear that the police were still doing that as he himself had been entrapped. James had left the Coleherne at closing time and was queuing for fish and chips in the shop next door, whilst in the queue he noticed a man smiling. James smiled back and they began to chat. The man told James that he lived around the corner in Brompton Road and invited James back for coffee. After they had walked 25 yards or so they were joined by another man; they then both identified themselves as police officers to James who was arrested for persistent importuning. In the police station James resisted the attempts to pressure him into pleading guilty and ignored the crude threats of telling James' parents and employers about his homosexuality. James pleaded not guilty to the charge of importuning and twelve months later a jury took five minutes to decide his innocence. James was 'appalled and angry to read that the police were still using cheap and illegal tactics to entrap men seven years later'.

□ When a photograph of one of the agent provocateurs involved in the Earls Court entrapment cases appeared in *Capital Gay*, Kevin contacted GALOP to say he had been stopped by the same officer earlier in the year. He had left a friend's flat after dinner and was walking to Earls Court tube. He was stopped and searched in a very abusive and threatening way and the officers told him that they 'didn't like his sort'. Kevin wrote and complained to the Police Complaints Board who replied that no action would be taken as the two officers had been interviewed and there was no evidence of any abusive or threatening behaviour. Kevin replied to this by saying if the officers were capable of lying about this it would imply they were capable of lying in court under oath.

□ GALOP was contacted by Larry the day after he received a black eye and a fractured skull. He had been in a well known gay pub in South London when eight straight men started attacking the customers. Larry went outside where there were two police vans and three police cars. When Larry asked a policeman to stop the fighting and protect the customers being attacked, the policeman said 'What do you expect? You're a queer in a queer's pub.' Larry reminded the police that his taxes paid that policeman's wages. Larry was then told to 'fuck off, before I nick you for drunk and disorderly'.

□ Malcolm was walking past a well known gay pub in Earls Court when he saw two men being pushed and shoved by two men and a woman, the two men were grabbed by the scruff of the neck and marched across the road and pushed into a garden hedge. Malcolm asked what was going on and was told 'What's it to you?' Malcolm said he wanted to know what was going on or he would call the police. The woman then said 'I am a police officer in plain clothes'. Malcolm was then shown some identity and then told to 'Fuck off or we will arrest you too!'. Malcolm offered to act as a defence witness for the two men and was then threatened again.

□ Nigel was walking home from a gay club in Kensington to his home half a mile away when he was stopped by the police. A policeman and a police woman stopped and searched him and asked his address and what he had been doing in the gay club. When Nigel asked why they were stopping him rather than looking for criminals he was arrested and charged with being drunk and disorderly. In the police station 'jokes' were made about queers and he was kept in a cell overnight with another man who was told to 'keep his back to the wall' as Nigel was a pouff.

□ Ossie and Patrick were in a very well known gay pub in the West End. At closing time they were told to leave by the bar staff in a very abusive manner. When Ossie and Patrick protested at the bar staff's anti-gay language, Ossie was hit in the face. Patrick telephoned the police to complain. When the police arrived, both Ossie and Patrick were arrested; Patrick was charged with assaulting a police officer and I was charged with being drunk and disorderly. In the police station, they complained about being called 'nancy boys, poofers and queers'. Patrick protested that their treatment was a perversion of British justice. The police officer told him 'I hate poofers and I enjoy perverting Justice!'. Patrick told the police they were not supposed to photograph or fingerprint people until they were convicted; they were told to 'shut up or we'll send you to Brixton [prison] where you'll be able to mix with other hairy-arsed queers'.



## The Job

When I started working for GALOP in July 1983 I was delighted to have the opportunity to make a contribution to the campaign for a democratically accountable police for London. I was excited to have the chance to work with and for the lesbian and gay population of London and pleased that these opportunities had been made possible through GLC funding. The funding from the GLC has made GALOP's work much easier than it would otherwise have been and it was good that for the first time London's gay population was not being ignored but was being given something in return for the rates and taxes we all pay.

My first task was to inform London's lesbian and gay population that GALOP existed and what its aims and objectives were. This meant highlighting through the gay press or talking to gay groups and individuals that there was a very real crisis of policing in London, a crisis in the way certain elements in the police force are literally out of control and a crisis of confidence in the police — large numbers of people no longer trusted the police. Attempting to raise the whole issue of how we as a gay community are policed, and discussing the urgent need to stop the police abusing their powers with a community that has been abused and harassed for years was not as easy as I had first imagined. For example, many gay men still regard being gay not as something they are, but as something they do. Many gay men still think of themselves as being gay when they are in a gay disco or in the privacy of their bedroom, but drop their gay identity when in their workplace or dole queue for example. Asking people, who had not previously thought about it, to think about the way police treatment of gays contributed to the oppression of gays and how that oppression was linked to the oppression of other groups and minorities — the black population being the obvious example — was a slow business. However I think in the seven months I have been working for GALOP one of our main achievements has been to raise the whole question of how London's police force treat the lesbian and gay population and how this population should respond to that treatment.

10.

In the minds of most people the campaign we became most closely identified with was the use of 'agent provocateurs' by Earls Court police station. 'Attractive' young men sometimes in ripped jeans were entrapping and arresting gay men for 'persistently importuning'. Stories of the use in Earls Court of police 'agent provocateurs' had circulated for many years yet when one talked to some gay men about it, including I am sad to say some of the victims who were themselves arrested, there was a feeling that these men had 'brought it upon themselves' and that simply being gay was a good enough reason for the police to act as they did. In the week following the publicising by *Capital Gay* of the news that three men who had fought the charges and had been found not guilty five men contacted GALOP to ask whether it was possible to re-open their cases. They had been arrested in the summer and had not fought the charges but pleaded guilty. One man said he had read about 'these three men getting away with it' and could he now re-open the case and change his plea. I had to tell him that unfortunately it was not possible and that he now had a criminal record. Whilst talking to him it became clear that he had not really thought about whether or not he was innocent of the charge of 'persistent importuning' but clearly regarded his gayness and the fact he went to the 'notorious' Coleherne as sufficient justification for his being arrested. In the same way as the respect and co-operation given to the police by the general public is the police's greatest weapon and allows them to 'bend the rules' the way gay people have internalised heterosexist oppression and regard themselves as deserving victims is the police's greatest weapon when attacking gay people.

I hope that as GALOP continues to collect evidence about the way the police regard all lesbians and gays as potential criminals and a threat to the established order more and more gay people will begin to fight back. As more people hear about the way we are attacked by the police or our requests for assistance ignored I hope that more people will attack the racist, sexist attitudes found within the police and which are being encouraged by this present Tory government in its call for a return to 'Victorian values'.

## Earls Court Campaign

Last summer GALOP started to receive complaints that police in Earls Court were hanging around gay pubs posing as gay men, approaching people for sex and then arresting them. A typical complaint was that a plain clothes policeman in his early twenties wearing a leather jacket and tight ripped jeans approached men leaving the Coleherne pub in Old Brompton Road. The policeman would ask what kind of sex they were into — 'Do you want a fuck or a blow-job?' — but then say the man's home was too far away, and that his own flat was close by. When they were well away from the pub, usually in Warwick Road, a second plain clothes officer would arrest the man for persistently importuning, despite the fact that it was invariably the policeman who made the first approach.

Stories of such police activities have circulated in the gay community for years. In a sense the reports were nothing new, but for the first time GALOP was able to collate the complaints and establish that the similarities in the incidents — from the words of the policeman's initial approach, to the place and manner of the arrest — all pointed to a concerted campaign of unlawful entrapment.

By October GALOP had received reports of at least 25 men who had been arrested in this manner. GALOP called a public meeting to discuss the problem and the response was overwhelming. A large crowd of gay people packed into the meeting room to discuss what had been going on and to hear new allegations of police violence and harassment.

The meeting urged men who had been arrested for importuning to fight the charges, but several men who had been arrested in the past told the meeting how important it was to have the support of friends during the long months waiting for the case to come up and at the trial itself. So one of the most significant decisions was to form the Earls Court Gay Support Group to offer support and practical advice to defendants who want to plead not guilty. The group is now operating independently, although still with GALOP's support.

The meeting attracted considerable interest in the media and Stuart Holland MP asked questions in the House of Commons about the Met's use of entrapment techniques. Douglas Hurd, Home Office Minister, quoted long standing Home Office guidelines that 'no member of a police force should counsel, incite or procure the commission of a crime'. He also said that in London, 'any use of officers in plain clothes for the purposes of keeping observation on suspected male importuners requires the authority of a Deputy Assistant Commissioner'.

The entrapment incidents in Earls Court were again cited in the House of Commons during a debate on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. Robin Corbett MP said the reports in *Capital Gay* that 'it was actually a plain clothes policeman who made the advances' was 'an extremely serious allegation'.

Of those arrested in the summer who pleaded not guilty four have already come up for jury trial at the Crown Court. All four have been acquitted. In one case they warned the jury that 'someone — the police or the defendant — is lying'. The jury took less than half an hour to acquit this defendant.

As well as the welcome acquittals, the trials also enabled *Capital Gay* to publish a photograph of one of the so-called 'pretty policemen' who had been arresting gay men in Earls Court.

## The Gay Sus Law

The offence of persistently importuning for an immoral purpose has been called the gay sus law because it is used by the police in a completely discriminatory way to harass gay men, not for what they do but for what they are. Like the use of the old sus law against black youths, it is used not to enforce the law or to stop crime but to regulate social behaviour in public that the police do not approve of. In short it is used to keep us off the streets as a visible presence.

The offence is a classic 'victimless crime', but one that the police are obsessively keen to prosecute, probably because convictions have proved to be easy to obtain: gay men are frequently persuaded by the police to plead guilty for such spurious reasons as that they will thereby avoid publicity, or the police threats to tell an employer or family.

The way judges have interpreted the offence seems to make it unfairly stacked against the defendant. As the offence is '*persistently* importuning' there must be at least two incidents, *but these need not occur on the same day!* nor in the same place! There is no need for the police evidence to be corroborated by a member of the public. In practice the police will claim with boring regularity that a member of the public was solicited and 'appeared disgusted'. No lawyer that GALOP has spoken to can recall a single case where the police have produced this person in court or could even identify him by name.

The Court of Appeal has ruled that lawful gay sex between adults may still be an immoral purpose.

With all this ranged against the defendant it may not seem surprising that the conviction rate for soliciting is amongst the highest for any crime in the book. And yet the real reason for this is that relatively few cases are contested and convictions are based on 'confessions' and guilty pleas.

A police spokesperson in Earls Court has asserted that 95% of men charged with soliciting who contest the charge before a jury in the Crown Court are judged to be not guilty.

12.

The legislative history of the soliciting offence is interesting as it was originally passed to protect women, particularly Victorian show-girls who were pestered by 'stage-door johnnys' as they left their theatres. Since then it has been re-enacted as s.32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and is now used exclusively against gay men. So women who suffer sexual harassment are left with no protection under the criminal law while gay men are regularly arrested and convicted for incidents where no member of the public has complained and no-one has been offended or upset. Since the 1967 Act legalised certain homosexual acts between consenting adults over 21 and in private, the police have intensified their efforts to the point where prosecutions for gay offences generally have doubled and convictions have trebled.

## A New Bill for the Old Bill

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When measuring the new Police and Criminal Evidence Bill against their experiences of London's police, lesbians and gay men find no justification for the new powers being created nor remedies for the gross inadequacies in the present standards of policing.

The police say they are just attempting to do their job of enforcing the law in difficult circumstances. As it happens our system of criminal law still condemns many aspects of relationships between gay men which if between heterosexuals are not criminalised at all. Indeed pages in popular magazines are given to informing readers how to 'chat up' members of the opposite sex in a manner which would lead to a prosecution for 'persistently importuning for immoral purposes' if used by one gay man towards another.

The Police Bill can make no changes to these laws (other legislation is required for that) but it can govern how these laws are enforced. Here the gay experience is of sustained policies of harassment, perverse use by the police of their discretion to prosecute, manipulation by the police to encourage the commission of offences and failure to respond to the real policing needs of lesbians and gay men.

It is important to stress that the issues which concern us are not only ones of arrests, abuse and harassment but also the lack of positive response to lesbians and gay men when they have had need of assistance from the police.

In Victorian England, the police divided the population into two classes: the propertied class they served and the 'criminal classes': this attitude is still current. Thus Inspector Basil Griffiths spoke to the 1982 conference of the Conservative Party: 'In every urban area there is a large minority of people who aren't fit for salvage. The only way in which the police can protect society is by harassing these people.' Gay people are included as a legitimate target for such harassment. A police training manual says:

'It is a sad reflection on modern society that there are still to be found in our midst persons who are so lewdly disposed that they will stoop to the most revolting and almost unbelievable acts of indecency. The terms 'sodomy', 'indecent exposure', 'lewd and libidinous practice' and 'gross indecency' etc, which are used in law give but little indication of the nature of these offences; the manner in which they are usually committed, and the evils they are liable to bring in their train. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that many innocent children fall victims of the foul activities of moral degenerates to the detriment of mind and health of body. . . Consequently, no effort is spared by the Police to suppress this insidious form of evil whenever and wherever it may occur.

Apart from actually detecting an act of indecency, the constable will play his part best by giving special attention to those parts of his beat, such as public parks and secluded public lavatories, which lend themselves to the activities of the morally degenerate. The movements of persons of manifestly lewd disposition should always be closely watched as many and varied are the artifices employed by these persons to achieve their evil objects.'

Police Training Manual 1980

The new Police Bill is the government's second attempt at responding to the Royal Commission on Criminal Evidence and Procedure and again the implementation of its recommendations has been selective on the side of greater police powers rather than protection for the citizen. The Commission itself was criticised for making an inadequate response to public concern at verified abuse of police powers. It is easy now to forget that the Royal Commission was established as a response to public disquiet in the Confait case in which three young men were wrongfully convicted of the murder of a gay man on the basis of false confessions extracted by the police.

The bill extends the power of the police to detain suspects without charge of any offence for up to 96 hours. Suspects can be held for the first 36 hours without access to a lawyer on the sole authority of the police themselves. This for practical purposes abolishes the remedy of *habeas corpus* and extends the coercive procedures available to the police for obtaining information and confessions from suspects. The new power will actually make repetition of the Confait case more likely.

For those who have not experienced it the mere isolation of an individual in police custody without further threat or coercion is sufficient to make them do anything to

secure release including sometimes making false admissions of an offence. Following the publicity given to the acquittals of several men who had been accused of importuning following entrapment by the police, GALOP was contacted by many other men, similarly entrapped, who had pleaded guilty to the charge under what they felt were the intolerable pressures of their situation. These pressures are increased by the denial of access to a lawyer for those arrested and the bill authorises that for up to 36 hours.

The bill grants this new power of detention, like certain other powers, against those suspected of serious arrestable offences. The definition of such offences given in the bill is wide, including those that not only have but 'are considered likely to' lead to certain consequences amongst which are 'serious injury', 'serious harm to the security of the state or public order' and 'serious financial loss to anyone'. 'Serious' for these purposes is not defined save that serious financial loss is to be assessed with regard to the circumstances of the loser. It is clear that few cases in practice are going to fall outside the definition.

New powers are created for the treatment of suspects inside police stations including fingerprinting without a court order before conviction and forcible stripping and intimate searching of the vaginas and anuses of suspects. Gay experience of humiliation by police officers is such that this last power has given rise to justifiable outrage among lesbians and gay men. The excuse given for the power is the need to search for weapons but some officers have spoken up to say such powers are not in fact necessary.

For the most part the rights of suspects in police custody are not set out in the bill but in a draft code of practice published by the Home Office which even when approved will have no statutory force. This will not materially alter the present situation in which the rights of suspects set out in the Judges' Rules can be ignored by the police and the evidence so obtained still allowed to be heard in court. Complaints regarding breaches of the codes of practice will have to be submitted through the police complaints procedure.

The bill also makes wide-ranging extensions of police powers outside police stations. The existing power in London for the stop and search of persons and vehicles is extended to searches for suspected offensive weapons. Courts have held that any object such as a key or comb can be an offensive weapon if the person carrying it has an intent to use it as such. Police officers will easily be able to form a suspicion that anyone is carrying an offensive weapon. This clause effectively creates a power of random stop and search. The Policy Studies Institute report commissioned by the Metropolitan Police themselves expressed great concern at the number of stops which were clearly taking place but unjustified by the present power. We are concerned at the scope for abuse of this power both generally and specifically against lesbians and gay men, since if resistance of gay people to such techniques as entrapment is effective they may be replaced by other forms of harassment.

14. Present police powers of arrest are complex and extend to a wide range of offences. The bill extends a power of arrest to any offence whatsoever if one of certain conditions is met. One of these conditions is that the suspect has committed or might commit 'an affront to public decency': this is not defined by the bill and even if it were, there are no restraints placed on the imagination of a police officer as to how it 'might' be committed. It is a proposal which will seriously affect lesbians and gay men, and anyone wearing a gay badge, holding hands or kissing in public or in any way asserting their sexual identity may under this clause face arrest for such trivial offences as illegal parking or dropping litter. This new power of arrest appears consistent with the general philosophy of this bill and other legislation to keep not only gays but other minorities such as black people and trades union activists off the streets.

The bill creates a new power to search premises of people who themselves are not even suspected of any offence. The bill restricts the granting of search warrants in cases where the police seek to search confidential records of organisations and agencies but the restrictions are made meaningless by the power given to the police to seize anything they consider may be evidence of any offence during a search. Therefore, the police could lawfully seize confidential files of an organisation like a Gay Switchboard while purportedly searching the building for stolen property or terrorists.

The bill commits the government to the principle of an independent prosecutions service to take over the conduct of prosecutions from the police. We have considerable grounds for concern as to how the police currently use their discretion to prosecute

offenders and an independent element is welcome; however although an Independent Prosecutor may bring a prosecution to a halt s/he is in a much weaker position to initiate one since knowledge of the case will depend on information provided by the investigating police officer.

The bill fails to tackle many important issues concerning the police. No amendment is proposed to the present law which permits the courts to hear evidence which has been obtained by the police improperly. Such an exclusionary rule would do more than anything to check abuses by police officers.

The bill fails to answer almost universal concern about the inadequate procedure for complaints about the police. Even the Police Federation now agrees that there should be a truly independent complaints body rather than the current system of police officers investigating complaints about each other. The bill makes some minor changes including more supervision for investigating officers but we do not expect this to restore public confidence. The experience of GALOP has been that gay men and lesbians with grievances against the police see little point in using a complaints system which enabled the Metropolitan Police to survive 1982 with only 3% of complaints upheld out of a total of 8,617.

The bill also responds inadequately to the most pressing issue concerning the police for the residents of London. This is the manner in which they are denied any say in how policy and priorities are determined. The bill proposes consultative liaison committees which would work between the Metropolitan Police and London Boroughs. The Greater London Council is excluded from this structure and the Borough representatives would not be entitled to require any information from the police or to determine policy in any way. In our view the exercise is a one-sided sham and in practice the Metropolitan Police will continue in its same self-regarding way accountable (notionally if at all) to the Home Secretary alone.

The Policy Studies Institute report (already referred to) and statements made by its co-author David Smith confirm the high level of prejudice articulated against lesbians and gay men by police officers. The report attributed this and related problems of racism and sexism to the militaristic, hierarchical (*and we would add patriarchal*) management structure of the force. The necessary changes to recruitment, training, structure and the self-image of London's police force will not occur by the sudden and mass conversion of police officers as they read the report. The necessary and fundamental changes required in the Metropolitan Police will come about only when the force submits to the will and needs of the population it is supposed to serve.

We see the police bill as part of the overall strategy of this government to tilt the balance of power and influence within the state even more heavily against the disadvantaged and the oppressed. If the proposals within the police bill are set in the contexts of recent legislation such as the Employment Act, the Nationality Act, and other proposed legislation such as the Data Protection Bill and the erosion of local democracy it can and should be perceived as part of a larger cycle of repression of the weaker members of society. The question we ask, but are fearful to answer, is: at what point do these shifts in power become irretrievable?

GALOP has considered it important to contribute to the opposition mounted to the bill. We participated in the formation of the National Campaign Against the Police Bill and we promoted a public meeting to discuss how the bill affected lesbians and gay men at which Gays Against the Police Bill was formed.

We have had lengthy discussions with the GLC on the contents of a leaflet they proposed to issue on how the police bill affected lesbians and gay men. We also assisted with a leaflet for Gays Against the Police Bill promoting the National March against the bill (which drew a very large lesbian and gay contingent).

We anticipate that within the limits of our resources and the substantial demands made upon them we shall continue to campaign on this issue during next year. We believe that there is already a high level of understanding on these issues among gay people but the success of the campaign will depend on whether this can be taken further and welded with the concerns of many other large sections of the community affected by the proposals. If the bill does become law GALOP will clearly have increased work, monitoring how it is applied in practice.

## GALOP and Other Groups

Since its earliest days GALOP has sought to form and maintain links with other groups involved in monitoring the police, and with other gay groups.

As mentioned earlier GALOP was founded after CHE had been in contact with other monitoring groups, and was in fact formed with the assistance of these groups. Although these groups have recognised the independence of GALOP they have, individually and collectively given GALOP much support and assistance, especially during the formative period.

GALOP keeps in regular contact with the other monitoring groups through the London Association of Police Monitoring Groups which meets regularly to discuss common problems and to exchange information on individual campaigns and other related issues. Less formal contact is kept by GALOP reporting to the locally based monitoring groups, any incidents which it receives, occurring in their areas, and by the local monitoring groups reporting to GALOP any incident which is likely to be of interest to GALOP.

Another important aspect of GALOP's contact with other groups has been its involvement in the Campaign Against the Police Bill. GALOP, together with the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights (LCGR), regularly attended the early meetings of the campaign, and this led to reserved places being made available for one lesbian and one gay man on the Executive Committee. GALOP, again with the assistance of LCGR, called a meeting which resulted in the formation of Gays Against the Police Bill, which has attempted to raise the awareness of lesbians and gay men of both the general and specific threats presented by the Bill. A leaflet outlining the Bill's main threats was prepared and distributed before the Campaign Against the Police Bill's demonstration, held in January, and this led to there being a significant gay and lesbian presence at the demonstration. GALOP has also worked closely with the GLC Police Committee Support Unit on the preparation of a leaflet on the Police Bill, specifically aimed at lesbians and gay men.

GALOP has also worked to maintain contact with other lesbian and gay groups operating within London. Many of the founding members were involved with other groups, such as CHE, Gay Switchboard and Gay Legal Advice. More recently GALOP has provided speakers for many groups, in which the issues of policing and the issues surrounding the Police Bill have been discussed. GALOP is pleased to note that whereas at the earlier meetings there seemed to be a high level of ignorance of these issues, there now appears to be a much deeper understanding of the issues and a desire to raise these issues as broadly as possible.

The gay press has also contributed to this better understanding of these issues. Capital Gay, in particular, has included many articles about GALOP, and given good coverage of the Earls Court campaign. Articles have also appeared in *Outrage* and *Him*. These magazines, especially those such as *Him*, which is not specifically aimed at the politically aware gays, allow GALOP to reach a much wider audience than it can hope to reach by concentrating on the areas of the gay movement that are nominally politically aware.

# Financial Report

## GAY LONDON POLICE MONITORING GROUP

### FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 1983

Income and Expenditure Account for the period 1 September 1982 - 31 August 1983

	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>		
Donations	181.40	
GLC Grant for Civil Rights Card	1414.67	
GLC Grant for Worker	2611.76	
		4207.83
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Workers Salary	1381.00	
Employer's National Insurance	161.69	
Premises Rent	130.00	
Advertising for Worker	181.15	
Secretary's Expenses	30.41	
Solicitors' Survey	98.40	
Bank Charges	10.21	
Telephone	80.00	
Stationery	74.77	
Volunteer's Expenses	31.08	
Postage	5.40	
Publications	11.96	
Worker's Expenses	6.48	
Telephone Answering Machine	189.75	
Typewriter	201.25	
Office Furniture	30.00	
Civil Rights Card	1414.67	
		4038.22
Surplus for the period (representing balance in General Fund at 31 August 1983)		169.61



Balance Sheet as at 31 August 1983

	£	£
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Advance Payment of Rent and Deposit	260.00	
Cash	1086.11	
Grant awaiting payment	834.35	
		2180.46
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Grant allocated for September 1983	1187.88	
Creditors	562.97	
Loan	260.00	
		2010.85
Representing:		
GENERAL FUND		169.61

**AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The above accounts have been prepared from books, vouchers and information supplied by the officers of the Gay London Police Monitoring Group, and are certified to be in accordance therewith.

MARK URWIN, ACA,  
15 Heath Drive,  
London NW3.

February 1984

The Gay Police Monitoring Group wants to hear about the treatment of lesbians and gay men by the police. If you witnessed or are involved in any incident, discuss it with our full time workers in confidence.

If you are a lesbian or gay man who supports GALOP's aims and would like to know more about our work or how you can join please write to the address below.

GALOP is grant aided by the GLC but we are in constant need of extra money. If you would like to help, donations can be sent to

Gay London Police Monitoring Group  
38 Mount Pleasant  
London WC1X 0AP

Telephone: 01-278 6215  
(Answerphone service out of hours)